

**MINUTES
JOINT MEETING OF
THE CULTURAL & SOCIAL AWARENESS COMMISSION
AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

February 11, 2016
City Council Chambers

The Special Meeting of the Cultural & Social Awareness Commission and Environmental Commission of the City of Woodstock was called to order at 6:07 PM on Thursday, February 11, 2016 in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

In the absence of Chairwoman E. Poremba and Chairwoman L. Crain the meeting was called to order by W. Donato. A roll call was taken.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: W. Donato, J. Hudson, I. Sagrado, E. Ellinghausen, L. Kacmar, and S. Wenzel.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: E. Poremba, L. Crain, J. Krandel, and J. Rivera.

STAFF PRESENT: Human Resources Director Debbie Schober, Assistant Public Works Director Tom Migatz and Chief Deputy Clerk Jane Howie

OTHERS PRESENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by J. Hudson, second by S. Wenzel to approve the January 7, 2016 Meeting Minutes as presented. Ayes: W. Donato, J. Hudson, I. Sagrado, E. Ellinghausen, L. Kacmar, S. Wenzel. Nays: None. Absentees: E. Poremba, L. Crain, J. Krandel, and J. Rivera. Abstentions: None. Minutes were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

D. Schober informed the Commission that Mayor Sager will review the Proclamation for the Bagless initiative.

W. Donato updated the Commission that he attended a meeting with the Board of the Woodstock Farmers Market to introduce and explain the possibility of the City's Bagless campaign. The Board was very responsive and seemed happy to comply with the request. Although the Commission is not exactly sure how the campaign will proceed, it is the hope that the initiative will begin this May. W. Donato also brought up the idea of the Market sponsoring a bag. The Board liked that idea and seemed excited at the possibility of creating a bag specifically for the Farmers Market.

W. Donato & J. Krandel met with City staff, G. Anderson and K. Coltrin, to discuss getting sponsorship for a reusable bag. Prior to moving forward to obtain sponsorship, the group felt it important to seek legal advice with this part of the project. S. Wenzel asked if friends of the City could assist with this project. W. Donato answered, yes. However, the Commission needs to wait until staff returns with information from the City Attorney. D. Schober explained that the only fund raising the City does is for the *Summer in the Park* event. All other fund-raising is done independently by event organizers / groups. D. Schober believes this to be true for this

project as well. W. Donato brought up the distribution of reusable bags. Who will be responsible for this task? Would Marengo Disposal drop off reusable bags when they pick up recycling and garbage? Or, would City staff hand out bags to residents when they come in to City Hall to pay their sewer and water bills? Some of the other questions the Commission has are; how many reusable bags are needed to get the campaign started? We're told there are 9000 households in the City of Woodstock. If we handed out one bag per household, do you think people would be interested in purchasing additional bags? Mayor Sager was looking into this, and the thought was for the campaign start with 25,000 reusable bags. We're shooting for 25,000 bags. W. Donato said he also believes that bags "Made in America" should be a high priority. W. Donato asked if any of the Commission members had any questions. There were no questions.

W. Donato said the Commission needs to share updates on research of BYOBag and discuss survey questions. One of the surveys we borrowed was from Cynthia; we made some changes to it. The other handout is for retailers. W. Donato said he and John Headley put this together. We'd like the Commission's input on what's acceptable and what changes should be considered. Once the Commission agrees on a survey, students could be sent out to start the survey process as early as March. L. Kacmar asked about a City of Woodstock consumer shopping bag survey. Would the survey ask about plastic, paper, and reusable shopping bags? L. Kacmar thinks the survey should ask the consumer what type of bags they currently use when shopping. Such as, 'check' all that apply. Or perhaps word the questions, what type of bags do you use the most? I'd like to know. This would be helpful information. The Commission needs to keep the survey from getting too lengthy.

W. Donato said the students will ask residents these questions. L. Kacmar mentioned question #4. There are instances when one forgets to put reusable bags in their car. Perhaps use a percentage for how often one uses their own reusable bag. L. Kacmar also tossed around some different name for the survey, such as, the City of Woodstock Consumer Shopping Bag Survey. With regard to question #7 that states what would one do if stores charged for plastic or paper bags? It would be interesting to know if the consumer would shop elsewhere. Or, if they would choose to purchase bags or bring bags. The Commission had discussed this last month; would this deter people from shopping at these stores? Question #8, "Are you aware that stores reward you monetarily when you bring your own bags?" L. Kacmar asked if this would really be offered. If so, people will be looking for this.

J. Hudson said that Aldi is an ideal place because you don't need to use any bags. He thinks it would be great if every store would do this. He added that if stores eliminate bags they'd also have to change their checkout counters. L. Kacmar said people have to bring bags or buy Aldi's boxes. D. Schober said that would give stores a way to get rid of their boxes. L. Kacmar would like the question changed from "should stores reward you," and in its place, ask "Are you aware that stores could reward you for bringing your own bag?" Word this as more of a direct question to get the answer the survey is really looking for.

S. Wenzel asked what retailers will get the survey. W. Donato said the survey they're currently discussing is for the consumers. There are two different surveys on the Agenda. L. Kacmar said that's she's interested in adding one additional question referencing what the Commission is trying to achieve with the bagless campaign. L. Kacmar thinks the survey should also ask, "If stores do not provide paper or plastic, would you shop there the same amount, less, or never?"

W. Donato wanted to know how this question is different from question #7. D. Schober clarified that this question asks the consumer if they would continue to shop at this store if they don't provide bags of any kind. W. Donato doesn't think that question should be included in the survey.

D. Schober asked the Commission members to email any survey information directly to her; she'll reply back to the Commission member(s). D. Schober will ask City Manager Roscoe Stelford if the students can begin to survey the retailers; Walmart, Jewel, etc. The students can select retailers as part of their project. D. Schober added that this is more of an educational campaign. A "tell us what you think, sort of thing".

W. Donato said the Commission hasn't created a retailers survey yet. This is something that could be completed by next month. D. Schober said the packet includes an example. Be certain to use the correct name; BYOBag.

E. Ellinghausen brought up disposable bags and said many people are oblivious to the extent of the problem. There needs to be some more education about the issues of plastic and paper bags.

S. Wenzel said that the survey they are reviewing tells about negatives. W. Donato explained that the document is for educational purposes. D. Schober said that when she discussed this campaign with G. Anderson the City had only had a discussion with Walmart, Mayor Sager & City Manager, Roscoe Stelford. At that time, Walmart was OK because they were they were told they could charge 5cents per bag, and Walmart would get half of that. Walmart was buying into getting money for bags. However, now the Commission has changed their mind and you prefer to go bagless. If this is the case, and the Commission wants the City to go bagless, you've lost this as a revenue source. Walmart has to produce bags, if we go bagless, they'll use those bags elsewhere. We haven't worked through all of this. We, as a Commission, need to figure out how to proceed. D. Schober added that the Mayor said there are several options. It's the Commission's job to research the options and make decisions.

D. Schober suggested the Commission discuss possible questions for the Retailer's Survey. W. Donato thought this would be an education plan to get the word out about the bagless campaign. D. Schober said this item should be placed on the Agenda for next month. W. Donato agreed. The Commission should be working on this document and decide upon a plan on how best to educate the consumers and retailers. S. Wenzel thinks it's important to get survey responses before The Commission actually proposes the campaign. L. Kacmar said she reviewed the documents. The Commission needs to write a statement, clarify the reasoning behind the campaign, give a purpose & intent; something similar to what the City of Evanston has done. Possibly start by defining and explaining the Green Movement and share the Commission's stance.

The decision must be made if we wish to ban just plastic; but, would reusable plastic bags still be an option. The Mayor had suggested paper as a possible option, with some money back to the store but, no plastic. So, the decisions need to be made before we can move forward. What bags will be exempt? Produce bags probably need to remain acceptable. And, will there be an exemption period that will allow retailers to use up the bags that they have on hand? After that, will there be fines instituted and/or violations issued? This can get pretty involved. W. Donato

asked if there is someone on the City staff that could write an Ordinance. D. Schober answered, yes, just give them some direction.

L. Kacmar said we as a Commission have to agree on these items. The example is well written and very direct & specific. How is it best to proceed? W. Donato said we're missing 4 members this evening, so we should wait for all Commissioners to be in attendance before making decisions. Exemptions would also include dry cleaners along with produce bags.

D. Schober said that currently Jewel has both paper & plastic bags. What does Walmart have? If our goal is no plastic, what will Walmart do? S. Wenzel said Walmart has that carousel with all the plastic bags hanging off of it, which was designed to accommodate plastic bags and consumer cloth bags. D. Schober voiced concern about giving Walmart a directive to purchase paper bags.

D. Schober said that over time the reusable bags wear out. L. Kacmar said the campaign could include an incentive program for bringing your own reusable bag. And, perhaps give the consumer a credit on their receipt. We'd have to determine how something like this would be monitored. E. Ellinghausen said he's not sure about allowing paper bags as a substitute for plastic. Studies indicate that paper uses a lot of natural resources and causes pollution, even if the paper is biodegradable. W. Donato said that was one of the criticisms about Chicago's bagless campaign and cited as a downfall. L. Kacmar said she read about bags made out of cornstarch. A bag company in Missouri made these bags that are biodegradable / compostable in 90 days. This would be a pilot program that the community gets involved with. Perhaps the City could set up a compost site. J. Hudson said paper bags are not biodegradable in landfills. W. Donato added that paper bags are biodegradable in a compost pile. E. Ellinghausen said there are negatives to switching to paper; it takes a higher toll on the environment. He doesn't feel that paper is an improvement. The Defenders switched to reusable bag. J. Hudson said at least paper bags don't damage creatures living in the ocean.

W. Donato advised that there would need to be a transition period. Perhaps there would need to be a timeline so that retailers could use up the bags. D. Schober said there would have to be an alternative. For example, what would visitors to Woodstock do? Would they be required to purchase a reusable bag if they didn't bring a bag to the store with them? What if they already have a stash of bags at home? D. Schober said she's not sure if paper is a viable alternative to plastic but there needs to be an alternative / option. L. Kacmar said she agrees, but one of her biggest questions is, what's the alternative? W. Donato said this would be part of the education to retailers and consumers. The City could make the campaign so important; it would bring a value to Woodstock. That's part of what the Commission has to do,

W. Donato said the next things to work on are creating the retailer's survey making a decision on what is the alternative to disposable plastic bags. D. Schober said she will send out information on key decisions that need to be made. Remember the reusable canvas bag that the Mayor brought in? That may be a high cost alternative but there's got to be a low cost alternative, as well. Perhaps stores could offer the high-quality higher cost bags versus a bag made out of a super light material that would cost much less. D. Schober said she's never seen a reusable plastic bag. L. Kacmar said they have them at Jewel; they are made out of a heavier plastic and they cost 10 cents. L. Kacmar has one and she used it about 10 times before it wore out. S.

Wenzel said he read that the bags that are petroleum based can be used approximately 50 times. L. Kacmar said they need to look into what entities will be affected by this campaign.

ADJOURN

Motion by S. Wenzel, second by I. Sagrado, to adjourn this Special Meeting of the Cultural & Social Awareness Commission and Environmental Commission. Ayes: W. Donato, J. Hudson, I. Sagrado, E. Ellinghausen, L. Kacmar, S. Wenzel. Nays: none. Absentees: E. Poremba, L. Crain, J. Krandel, and J. Rivera. Abstentions: none. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM. The next Special Meeting of the Cultural & Social Awareness Commission and Environmental Commission will be held on Thursday, March 3, 2016 at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Howie
Chief Deputy Clerk